

# Poetry Porch: Poetry

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## **A Saddle for Aunt Pat**

By Michael Todd Steffen

Spools of waxed thread  
and leather sewing needles  
and hole-punch pliers  
fumble between my tongue and knowhow  
who only knew the musky scent  
of horses from that corner of the stable  
where my uncle kept his hands busy  
restoring a saddle

part by part,  
D-ring, off-billet, latigo . . .

*Let it go*, the thing that straps me  
is already saying  
from my aunt's last bed  
2000 miles west  
and near as the dark crimson of my eyelids  
when I close them and see  
her freckles and the natural squint of her eyes  
forming a grin between us,  
the back and forth of our talk  
seeking the punchline to a story  
like the one about me falling off a horse.

Or the one about her trying  
to understand a poem I'd written  
and here again the laugh is on me  
as I wander in the dream,  
a town kid gone out to  
the ranch for a summer week  
and into the dark stable

to find through a waft of horse  
my uncle sitting at his work bench there  
peering intensely through his glasses' lenses  
to set a rivet,

a moment in a lifetime,  
one small thing among so many  
to keep your place together  
on the ride up a mountain trail.